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Canning Chicken

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A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, September 10, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 87 associate radio stations.

--ooOoo--

KADDERLY:

We're calling first on Ruth Van Deman....to give us the good word from the Bureau of Home Economics.

VAN DEMAN:

The good word for September 10, Wallace, seems to be about chicken under cover.

KADDERLY:

Chicken under cover! Well, now, would that be chicken pie maybe....chicken under a good brown crust....in a big baking dish....hot and steamy?

VAN DEMAN:

That certainly is chicken under cover, Wallace, - in a highly edible form. But I was thinking of chicken a stage or two back of chicken pie. I was thinking about chicken in glass jars and tin cans.

KADDERLY:

Oh, I see, canned chickens this is. Home canned I suppose.

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly, home canned and home grown.

KADDERLY:

Some of the 2-year old hens maybe, the non-layers called out of the flock before winter, to save feed?

VAN DEMAN:

That's the idea exactly.

KADDERLY:

And the surplus cockerels that are eating their heads off!

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, if there's no other way to use the cockerels. But the loafing, lazy, plump hens make the best canned chicken.

KADDERLY:

Why's that?

● VAN DEMAN:

Richer....more flavor...better texture.

(over)

KADDERLY:

I should think the younger birds would be more tender.

VAN DEMAN:

It doesn't seem to work out that way. Young cockerels make rather stringy canned chicken. But of course there are exceptions to most every rule.

KADDERLY:

There's one rule I've never yet heard you make any exception to....any time I've heard you talk about home canning.

VAN DEMAN:

What's that? Hope I'm not going to have to eat my own words here.

KADDERLY:

No, no, I don't think so. It's that rule about steam pressure for non-acid vegetables and meats.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh, yes, the bacteriologists made that one. They're the ones who say it isn't safe to make exceptions to that rule. You see, they know what goes on inside the jars packed full of food, while they're processing in a canner.

KADDERLY:

Heat penetrates to the center of those jars fairly slowly, I imagine.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, especially in a compact food like chicken or meat. And being protein if it isn't sufficiently sterilized at the right temperature and for a long enough time...well, you know what spoiled chicken is like.

KADDERLY:

Pretty undersirable article.

VAN DEMAN:

And a sad waste of good food. ... But let's get over on the positive side of this chicken canning, Wallace. What do you say we can some chicken in the safe, scientific way. Here's a canning bulletin for you. I brought along an extra copy for you.

KADDERLY:

That was thoughtful. I can't say that I ever canned chicken before.

VAN DEMAN:

There's nothing complicated about it. We'll just assume that we have good fresh-killed chickens, properly cleaned, and all cut up...

KADDERLY:

Cut up just as you would for chicken pie?-

VAN DEMAN:

That's right.

KADDERLY:

Chicken pie still being my objective, you'll note.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I note that well. Now, let's separate the pieces of chicken into three piles...one pile of the thick meaty pieces.

KADDERLY:

O.K. Here in this pile go the second joints...drumsticks...thick pieces of white meat off the breast...

VAN DEMAN:

The bony pieces go in another pile.

KADDERLY:

Very well...wings...backs...necks, assemble yourselves over here.

VAN DEMAN:

We'll make broth with them to pour over the thick meaty pieces after they're packed in the jars.

But first we'll take off any big lumps of fat. Too much fat makes canned chicken hard to process. Underline that, Wallace, in your bulletin. That's important.

KADDERLY:

"Too much fat makes chicken hard to process." O.K. I'll underline that in red. Now, what do we do with this third pile---the giblets?

VAN DEMAN:

Keep them separate from everything else. If giblets are canned with the other chicken meat, they discolor it, and give it an unpleasant flavor. Sometimes chicken livers are canned all by themselves. But personally I'd rather cook them and have a feast of fresh chicken livers on toast.

KADDERLY:

Second the motion. I'm for that! By the way, we don't take this chicken meat off the bone?

VAN DEMAN:

You can if you want. But it seems to have better flavor when it's left on the bone.

Since we're using glass jars, we'll precook this chicken about 20 or 30 minutes in the oven and pack it hot.

KADDERLY:

How about sort of frying it?

VAN DEMAN:

No, that calls for fat, and fat you remember makes the processing difficult.



KADDERLY:

I just got through underscoring that fact, didn't I?

VAN DEMAN:

And the browning, that gives such good flavor to fried chicken, doesn't hold over in the canned chicken....No, our people say thumbs down on frying chicken before canning. A short precook in water is better.

KADDERLY:

What size glass jars are we using?

VAN DEMAN:

Pints. Some people use quarts, and get by with it. But they take a longer time to process.

Pint jars of chicken left on the bones need a 65 minute process at 15 pounds pressure.

KADDERLY:

15 pounds pressure. That's equivalent, if I remember my tables right, to a temperature of 250°F?

VAN DEMAN:

That's right. And we'll need to keep an eye on that pressure canner and regulate the heat under it, so the pressure doesn't fluctuate.

KADDERLY:

Suppose you were canning this chicken out in the Rocky Mountain country, where the altitude's six thousand or so feet.

VAN DEMAN:

I'd add two pounds more pressure. When you have altitudes of over 2000 feet, you add a pound of pressure for each additional 2000 feet.

KADDERLY:

That's because at high altitudes water boils at a lower temperature than it does at sea level.

VAN DEMAN:

That's it. When you're canning you're doing a sterilizing job. You have to have the heat intense enough to kill the bacteria.

KADDERLY:

Well, Ruth, I just have a hunch this chicken we canned here today is going to keep perfectly.

VAN DEMAN:

I hope so.

KADDERLY:

But that isn't all. Some day next winter it's going to be the starter for chicken pie.

VAN DEMAN:

Chicken pie of the future. All right, Wallace, how about putting that label on every jar, along with the date and your initials.

KADDERLY:

My initials?

VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes. Every good canner signs and dates his product....as a matter of record.

KADDERLY:

But you're the head canner.

VAN DEMAN:

But you held the canning bulletin. That's the final authority.

KADDERLY:

Well, Farm and Home friends, if any of you would like a copy of this authority on canning chicken...this free bulletin on "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats" ...(ad lib offer of bulletin.)

